VATICAN NEWS

POPE ALGERIA POPE LEO XIV APOSTOLIC JOURNEY

Pope on board plane to Algeria: ‘I am not a politician, I speak of the Gospel'

During the flight to Algeria, Pope Leo XIV responds to questions regarding US President Donald Trump's recent statements, saying he is "not a politician" and that he will "continue to speak strongly against war, seeking to promote peace and dialogue."

Vatican News

During the short flight to Algeria, Pope Leo addressed the journalists—as is tradition on papal flights—answering questions about the statements US President Donald Trump made against him on the Truth Social network.

The Pope stressed that he does “not see my role as that of a politician. I am not a politician, and I do not want to enter into a debate with him.”

Moreover, he continued, “I do not think the message of the Gospel should be abused as some are doing. I continue to speak strongly against war, seeking to promote peace, dialogue, and multilateralism among states to find solutions to problems. Too many people are suffering today, too many innocent lives have been lost, and I believe someone must stand up and say there is a better way.”

Pope Leo greeted journalists on board the papal plane (@Vatican Media)

The Pope then renewed the same call with which he began his pontificate: peace. “I say this to all world leaders, not only him [President Trump]: let us end wars and promote peace and reconciliation.”

Responding to an American journalist who asked the same question, the Holy Father explained, “I have no fear of the Trump administration or speaking out loudly of the message of the Gospel, which is what I believe I am here to do, what the Church is here to do.”

“We are not politicians,” he argued. “We don’t deal with foreign policy with the same perspective he might understand it, but I do believe in the message of the Gospel, as a peacemaker.”

The US Bishops respond

In response, Archbishop Paul Coakley, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, said he was "disheartened" by the President’s words.

"Pope Leo is not his rival, nor is the Pope a politician," he said in a statement. "He is the Vicar of Christ, who speaks from the truth of the Gospel and for the care of souls."

An ongoing message of peace

Peace is one of the guiding themes of this Apostolic Journey to four African nations. This journey, Pope Leo explained, is special for a number of reasons, including that it was meant to be “the first of the pontificate.”

He expressed his joy at being able to revisit the land of St. Augustine, who, the Pope said, “offers a very important bridge in interreligious dialogue.” This opportunity to travel to the place where this North African saint served as bishop is a blessing for the Pope, but, he stressed, “also for the Church and for the world, because we must always seek bridges to build peace and reconciliation.”

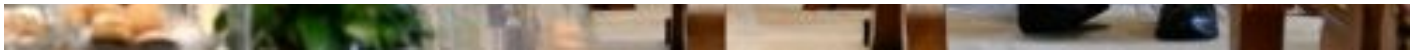
The Pope addressed questions regarding the US President's statements against him (@Vatican Media)

He closed his greeting to journalists by highlighting the journey’s overall mission—to continue forward with the “same voice and the same message: what we want to do is promote peace, reconciliation, respect, and consideration for all peoples.”

On the ground in Algeria

The papal plane touched down in the capital city of Algiers, and Pope Leo was welcomed by the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

Greeted by rainy weather, the Holy Father went directly into the Salon d'Honneur (Hall of Honor) of the airport, where a young girl in traditional dress presented him with flowers before the Honor Guard performed different anthems. Following the welcome ceremony, Pope Leo had a brief private meeting with President Tebboune.



The President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria welcomed the Pope (@Vatican Media)

After the private audience, the Pope traveled to the Maqam Echahid (Martyrs’ Memorial) for his first stop during the three-day visit to Algeria.

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